

I am writing to express my views as a mentor teacher. The new evaluation process known as SEED is not appropriate for new teachers. First and second year teachers are in the middle of working to improve their practice and reflecting on what makes a good teacher through the TEAM program. They are already required to choose areas in which they need work, try some strategies, and write two reflection papers each year to demonstrate what they have learned. Prior to this year, TEAM was an excellent introduction to teaching for the newly inducted. Now it is an added burden to new teachers as they struggle to learn about classroom management, teaching, and learning. Both SEED and TEAM require a good amount of time, most of which is not within contract hours. I fail to understand how doubling the work is going to help these new teachers improve their practice! TEAM is a very effective program for new teachers when it is used by itself. It allows the teachers time for reflection, brainstorming, trying new strategies, and it provides the support of a mentor. This is the only work that these teachers should be doing.

Am I saying we should not observe new teachers? No, not at all. They should be observed and evaluated informally, without having to write the detailed lesson plans, SLOs, and IAGDs. A written report could be filed for them, but they should be free of the burden of this complicated, time-consuming evaluation system. They have very little time for planning and honing their craft, because they are busy trying to write the required goals, meet deadlines, and figure out how to perform so they do not receive a bad evaluation. If we use common sense, we realize that TEAM, when properly implemented by itself, is a much more appropriate introduction to teaching than SEED. New teachers are essentially still apprentices, because one does not really learn to teach except by teaching. I truly believe that my mentee would have had a much more successful, happy year if she had not been forced to do double the work. I beg you to reconsider this issue and free the new teachers from SEED until year three.

Sincerely,

Susan H. Guertin, Ed.D